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Slow Pace Seen For Revamping Security Policies

Officials Cite Concerns Raised by Spy Cases

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 27 — Senior officials in Congress and the Reagan Administration say it will take years to fully repair the weaknesses in security policies brought to light by the recent series of damaging espionage cases.

Despite the distress sparked by last year's breaches in the nation's most sensitive military and intelligence agencies, proposals for security improvements are moving at an uneven pace, and have been slowed in some instances by interagency disagreements over how best to deal with the problem, the officials said.

"I think we're way behind and we have a long way to go," said Senator Patrick J. Leahy, the Vermont Democrat who is vice chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence. "With some notable exceptions, particularly in the C.I.A., I don't think near enough has been done. If this were private industry, the board of directors would be fired for a performance like this."

Lack of Overall Policy

But Administration officials say they have begun a major effort to protect sensitive information and assign greater importance to security issues. They say that some initiatives, such as a 10 percent reduction in the number of people who have access to secret information, are already showing results, but they acknowledged that others will take substantial time to carry out.

A Senate Intelligence Committee report issued late last year found "troublesome evidence of a lack of overall national policy guidance, especially with regard to security programs and countermeasures that are supposed to protect classified information."

Just last week, Jerry A. Whitworth, one of 17 Americans charged with espionage last year, was convicted on 12 of 13 counts of spying for the Soviet Union and tax evasion. Security experts say the Whitworth case and the others have each pointed up major weaknesses in security personnel and

Continued on Page A16, Column 1

ARMY TO PRESENT AIR DEFENSE PLAN COSTING $8 BILLION

PANEL REVIEW TOMORROW

New Weapons Would Replace Sergeant York Gun That Was Scrapped in 1985

By JOHN H. CUSHMAN Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 27 — A year after the Defense Department canceled the Sergeant York air defense gun as a failure, the Army is seeking approval to spend $8 billion to $22 billion on weapons to protect front-line divisions from air attack.

Army leaders will present the plan, pieced together over several months, at a top-level Pentagon review on Tuesday. The plan calls for buying a variety of weapons ranging from heat-seeking missiles to projectiles guided from afar through glass filaments.

Critics say that the plan costs too much, that the Army could end up buying the wrong weapons and that a crucial mistake of the Sergeant York failure — trying to move too fast — is about to be repeated.

Demise of a Weapons System

The Sergeant York, also known as the Divad, or division air defense gun, was canceled last August by Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger after the Army had spent $1.8 billion on its development.

Belated tests proved that the weapon, consisting of two guns and a radar set mounted on an armored vehicle, could not destroy helicopters hovering close to the ground, behind hills and trees or at a distance.

If the demise of the Sergeant York illuminated the failings of the military procurement system, the search for another way to provide battlefield air defenses illustrates that purchasing weapons is never a simple matter.

A Scramble Among Contractors

The Army now plans to spend perhaps $8 billion in building five types of weapons to fend off helicopters and jet fighters. Some Army estimates have

tended two conferences on Mars [illegible] this month in Washington, D.C.

Space Agency Conferences

The conferences, sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, were designed to whet scientific interest in Mars. A day of scientific sessions organized by the National Air and Space Museum was followed last week by two days of meetings organized by the National Academy of Sciences that were devoted to plans for unmanned missions to Mars and speculation about manned expeditions.

Dr. Parker cited what he said he believed were former beach lines around the edges of the larger basins. It is difficult to assess this theory, however, because data on landscape elevations are unavailable.

Dr. Parker said in a telephone interview that he hoped to estimate "fairly reasonable heights" of beach areas by evaluating photographs showing illumination of the beach slopes when the Sun is at different angles. He hopes to determine whether what he believes are beach lines are in fact at the same level.

A radar altimeter to be carried by a [illegible] should show depths of the [illegible] not the heights of features as narrow [illegible] beach remnants.

Reservoirs of Frozen Water

Seas could not exist for any length [illegible] time on Mars because the planet is [illegible] far from the Sun that water erupt[ing] onto its surface would freeze rapi[dly] and then dissipate into the thin, dry [atmo]sphere. According to Dr. Carr, h[owe]ver, underground reservoirs of fro[zen] water are extensive and particul[arly] abundant at high latitudes.

The landscape in those areas, [he] said, appears to have flowed as if lu[bri]cated by buried ice. At low latitudes [the] land should not be frozen to dep[ths] greater than a half mile, he added.

Dr. Carr theorized that below [the] are very extensive reservoirs of wa[ter]. Eruptions of this water, he said, m[ay] have created surface features sug[ges]tive of catastrophic flooding, suc[h] that which shaped an area in the [east]ern part of the state of Washin[gton] called the scablands.

The area was swept by a flood so [ca]tastrophic that it removed all the to[pso]il and much of the bedrock. The [flood] came at the end of the last ice [age] 12,000 years ago, after the collap[se of] an ice dam that blocked drainage [from] much of what is now western Mont[ana].

Underground Drainage Syste[m]

Since it never rains on Mars, s[ome] tists have been puzzled by Martia[n] ley systems and tributaries resem[bling] those on Earth.

Dr. Victor R. Baker of the Univ[ersity] of Arizona, who has studied the [Mar]lands of eastern Washington as a[n] logue of the scouring that occurr[ed on] Mars, believes they first formed [under]ground in an erosion process lik[e] typical of the Colorado Plateau [called] process, known as sapping, [occurs] when water eats into an easily [eroded] formation, such as the Navaho

Officials See Long Effort to Repair Flaws in Protection of U.S. Secrets

Continued From Page A1

counterintelligence policies.

Employees at various agencies were able to smuggle secret documents out of buildings, unimpeded by even a random search of briefcases. And officials say the cases point out the threat posed by the number of diplomats allowed to staff Soviet posts in the United States.

A key area of concern is the granting and renewing of security clearances; the spy investigations have shown that people can be cleared for access to secret data early in their careers and then never be re-examined.

John A. Walker Jr., a former Navy chief warrant officer who recruited Mr. Whitworth as a spy, was, for example, never reinvestigated from the time he received a top-secret clearance in 1965 until his retirement in 1976. Mr. Walker, who pleaded guilty to espionage last October, began spying for the Soviet Union by 1968, and Federal investigators say he was paid more than $1 million over the next 10 years.

Mr. Whitworth's first re-examination did not come until nine years after he received his top-secret clearance and he was approved. But he had begun passing sensitive information to Mr. Walker four years earlier, in 1974.

Since 1983, Pentagon rules have required reinvestigations every five years for those holding clearances of top secret and above. Periodic reappraisals are crucial to improving security, said Mary C. Lawton, the Justice Department's Counsel for Intelligence Policy.

"If you look at all the spy cases," she said, "most people were pretty clean coming in. They soured afterwards."

A Four-Year Backlog

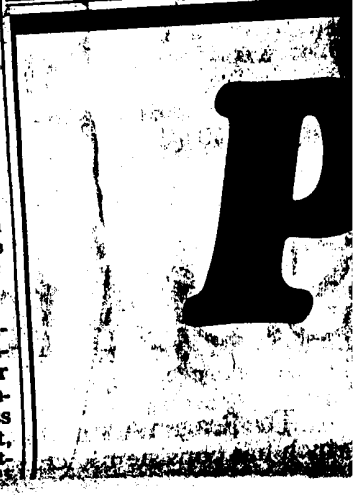
past few years was the high-level interest in the problem, spurred by the spy cases. "In the past, people who raised these subjects tended to be scoffed at," said Roy Godson, a Georgetown University professor who served on the Central Intelligence Agency's transition team when the Reagan Administration was first taking office. "Now they're taken seriously. Still, there's still a long way to go between a commitment to change and actually making improvements in security for a vast bureaucracy."

The espionage cases have also illustrated specific failings in the agencies involved. The Central Intelligence Agency, for instance, has been revising its personnel rules since the case of Edward L. Howard, a former officer who was dismissed after being trained for service in Moscow. Officials familiar with the case say that Mr. Howard was able to tell the Soviet Union about American techniques for contacting agents in Moscow. This in turn allowed the Russians to make a series of arrests and expulsions, and in at least one case, the execution of a Soviet citizen working for American intelligence.

Mr. Howard was dismissed from the C.I.A. after failing a polygraph, or lie-detector, test on drug use and other misdeeds. Under its new policy the agency would place such an employee in a less sensitive position, rather than dismiss him outright and jeopardize the information he possessed.

Interagency Study Group

One Administration effort to improve security throughout the Government has gained momentum this year after several years of inactivity. An interagency committee headed by Miss Lawton of the Justice Department, which began meeting in 1983, is rewrit[ing]



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A Four-Year Backlog

More than 90 percent of the 3.5 million security clearances are held by members of the armed forces or military contractors, and Pentagon officials estimate that the current backlog of people awaiting reinvestigation numbers 250,000. L. Britt Snyder, the Pentagon's Director of Counterintelligence and Security Policy, acknowledged that it would take as long as four years to eliminate the backlog.

Mr. Snyder said that Congress last year gave the Defense Investigative Service, which carries out the investigations, an additional $25 million to hire 600 to 700 additional investigators. The money was not included in the Administration's budget request for the Pentagon and was added by Congress.

Senator Leahy contended that the Defense Department's budget requests have routinely slighted security programs in favor of more visible items like new weapons. "The problem is, they're much more into public relations than security," he said. "Security measures are not glamorous. No one gets to sit on the bridge and command them. We just don't see the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of the Navy up here asking for more money for security."

Mr. Snyder said the Pentagon had begun to carry out the recommendations of a commission headed by Richard G. Stilwell, a retired Army general. Among these are plans, beginning Oct. 1, to expand the investigation required for the clearances to use information classified "secret."

The expanded investigation will include a credit check and written inquiries to previous employers. Now, access to "secret" information — which nearly three million people have — is granted if the serviceman or employee does not show up on the files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation or Pentagon investigative agencies.

A more extensive background investigation, involving interviews with references, is done only for top-secret clearances.

Government Changes Slowly

"To me, the pace seems pretty fast because it takes so long for anything to change in the Government," said Mr. Snyder. "Things are happening in due course, although it may look slow to an outsider. It takes a long time for a place the size of D.O.D. to make its policy changes felt at the lowest levels."

Mr. Snyder and others said that one of the most significant changes in the

Interagency Study Group

One Administration effort to improve security throughout the Government has gained momentum this year after several years of inactivity. An interagency committee headed by Miss Lawton of the Justice Department, which began meeting in 1983, is rewriting the 33-year old executive order that sets standards for granting security clearances and investigating employees.

On May 1, 1984, the committee asked the National Security Council for guidance on the scope of its work, but it got none for nearly two years. The council finally resolved the questions last February, after Congressional insistence.

Miss Lawton of the Justice Department, who is chairman of the panel, said she expects its work to be completed by the end of this year. She said the group has been struggling to come up with procedures and rules that would improve security while still meeting the Defense Department's need for upwards of three million security clearances for employees and contractors.

Cost Is a Key Factor

Cost and practicability are important considerations in the committee's work. One proposal that was considered and rejected called for clearance holders to submit an annual form on personal financial data. But the Pentagon reminded the group that this would require hiring enough people to read and analyze a cascade of three million new records each year.

"Ideally, you would have person-by-person judgments based on a background investigation for every single person, but we can't afford that," said Miss Lawton. "Our attitude is: 'What is the best we can reasonably expect?' There is no way we can reach ideal." She said the Pentagon has estimated that it would cost $80 billion annually to perform a full investigation, complete with field interviews, of all personnel and contractors who have access to classified information.

Another perennial Government effort called for by numerous studies is a reduction in the amount of classified data. The theory, according to counterintelligence experts, is that when everything is classified, nothing is. Cutting the amount of classified information has proved difficult for the Reagan Administration. According to an annual report by the Information Security Oversight Office, the total number of decisions to classify data rose by 14 percent from 1984 to 1985, to a total of more than 22 million. In 1981, there were 17.3 million such decisions.